



# ITS Public Safety



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Federal Highway  
Administration

P R O G R A M

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## Model Procedures Guide for Highway Incidents Promotes Standardized Organization

The Model Procedures provide guidance for integrating and managing law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency medical services, and transportation response to highway incidents.

A terrorist incident on an Interstate highway would require response from many agencies—but how should they be organized? *Model Procedures Guide for Highway Incidents*, a draft document developed by the National Fire Service Incident Management Systems Consortium, shows how the incident management system that has been used by fire and emergency management agencies for many years may also be used for many types of highway incidents.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT's) ITS Public Safety Program, the *Model Procedures Guide* adapts the Incident Management System (IMS) for highway incident operations, and provides examples of command structures for a wide variety of highway incident scenarios—from terrorist incidents to winter storms, parades, hazardous material spills, and more typical motor vehicle crashes.

### How Does the Incident Management System Work?

- The IMS provides a complete, systematic organization that includes the major functions of Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. Local agencies decide how to provide staffing for standardized tasks.

- The IMS is designed for use on all types and sizes of highway incidents—from routine mechanical breakdowns and crashes to severe weather events and terrorist events. The IMS allows organizational structure to expand and contract according to the incident requirements, allowing smooth transition between single unit responses and multi-agency operations.
- The IMS builds the organization from the ground up, adding functional units for new incident activities. The incident is partitioned into manageable tasks, and the best qualified response resources are assigned to each need. As the incident grows in complexity, IMS maintains a safe span of control, and ensures that all activity is conducted under a single chain of com-





mand. The safety of responders, crash victims, and motorists is protected, while the impact of the incident on traffic flow and the surrounding community is mitigated.

- Codified in the national ANSI standard NFPA 1560, IMS has been proven in the field and fine-tuned over nearly 30 years of operational use by emergency services. It also can incorporate non-emergency responders—such as transportation, public works, and public health agencies—into the IMS organization. The organizational terminology used in the model procedures guide is standardized for all of the emergency response professions, and for all levels of government.
- The IMS recognizes that all highway incidents are managed under the authority of the agencies having statutory jurisdiction. Multi-jurisdictional incidents may be managed under a unified command structure that includes representation from each jurisdiction. Assisting and supporting agencies also participate through their contributed resources, on-site agency representatives, and through liaison or information channels.

## Both Safety and Traffic Flow are Important Objectives

The *Model Procedures Guide* addresses the need to balance the safety of motorists, responders, and crash victims with the need to restore traffic flow. Incident Commanders are encouraged to consider the following factors when managing a highway incident:

- Providing emergency services and removing the traffic blockage as quickly as possible;

- Protecting incident responders (and those in their care) from moving vehicles;
- Protecting motorists, passengers and cargo from the hazards of the incident;
- Facilitating the movement of emergency response vehicles;
- Facilitating traffic flow past the incident and throughout the region.

*DOT is funding the development of the model procedures through the Joint Program Office's ITS Public Safety Program. More information about the draft Model Procedures for Highway Incidents and the DOT Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Public Safety Program is available on the Internet at [www.its.dot.gov](http://www.its.dot.gov). Click on "Public Safety," and then "Fire and Rescue."*

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